

ASLEF

The ASSOCIATED SOCIETY of LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & FIREMEN

JOURNAL



JUNE 2015

AAD flies high at the Kursaal



Annual conference
meets in Southend



Chris Proctor's thumb up for
King John and Magna Carta



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Rollercoaster ride to a better, brighter, future

WHAT a rollercoaster ride of emotion! I was despondent after a general election result that will destroy civil society, our rights, real jobs, and force us to accept food banks, with welfare underwriting rogue employers who refuse to pay proper wages to hardworking families and make them reliant on social subsidy to survive. In Scotland we have the problem of reinventing Labour as a viable alternative. But we should see this as an opportunity because now is the time to make the argument about policy, and delivery for people, not on the basis of self-determination, an issue which has divided the communities we should be serving.

I am enormously proud of the efforts of those of you who went out and campaigned – and especially those who stood as candidates – and the experience will serve you, and us, in the future. Whatever your political persuasion, because of the timescales for the election of a new Labour Party leader, and the selection of a candidate to run for London Mayor, we are increasing our efforts to give you, and your trade union, the right to be part of the process. Please fill in the form (see page 4).

So to conference and no evidence of a fractured society based on individual greed, but of a real community, with real people recounting personal experiences that touched the intellect, and the heart, and informed the decisions required to reaffirm existing policies and drive our future programmes. Those decisions will be collated, discussed, and sent out by the EC in the coming weeks for raising in the machinery and stakeholder forums. The passion, empathy and unity you showed demonstrated that behaving as a trade union is what it is all about. Pay and conditions may be core but have to be based on the historical values for which we fought and which make us what we are. I am extremely heartened by what I saw and heard at AAD and I know we can have a brighter, better, future.

Yours fraternally

Mick Whelan, general secretary



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ABOUT **ASLEF**

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Your party, your voice

THE Labour Party's link with the trade union movement has been a historic and successful relationship for more than a century. It's about the voice of trade union members being heard as the party shapes policy, and provides the party with a vital bridge to the communities it seeks to serve.

This relationship is changing and that's why ASLEF is running a campaign to recruit members of this union as affiliated supporters of the party. Members who live in London need to become affiliated

QUOTE...

'For those of us who can remember the Thatcher years, I fear the next five years are going to be worse.' – **Philip Devonport, Marylebone branch**

...UNQUOTE



Scottish delegates at AAD joined jubilant Shrimpers fans on the pitch at the end of Southend United's 3-1 victory over Stevenage at Roots Hall to reach the League Two play-off final against Wycombe Wanderers at Wembley. 'At least, unlike 1977, this Tartan Army left the turf and the goalposts,' muttered DO7 Brian Corbett. Although YouTube footage suggests it was a close-run thing...

BRILLIANT OUTCOME

Members of the Co-operative group, at its AGM, voted to continue making subscriptions to the Co-operative Party. 'It was a brilliant outcome,' said Co-op Party general secretary Karin Christiansen. 'I would like to thank ASLEF for helping us get such a positive result.'



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GS Mick Whelan speaking at the Labour Party conference in Manchester last year

supporters by 19 June, to vote for Labour's candidate to run as Mayor of London, and by 12 August to vote for the party's next leader and deputy leader.

'It's your party, and your voice,' said general secretary Mick Whelan. 'And it's really important because it strengthens your voice as a trade unionist in the party and gives you a voice in the future policies of the party. The next Labour leader will, I hope, be the next prime minister, and the London Mayor, as chair of TfL, has a significant influence on the Underground, Overground, and Croydon Tramlink. And it costs you nothing.' You can get a form from your branch secretary, our website, or www.support.labour.org.uk

MURPHY WALKS AFTER MOTION

Scottish Labour Party leader Jim Murphy, clinging to the wreckage of his centre-right strategy after leading Labour to disaster at the general election, eventually read the writing on the wall when Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF's organiser in Scotland, moved a motion of no confidence at a Scottish executive committee meeting in Glasgow.

After a long debate the motion fell 14-17 but Murphy realised his position was untenable.

Kevin said: 'This is a step in the right direction in getting Labour back connecting with the Scottish people.'

The politics of hope will trump the politics of fear



Manuel speaking at AAD in Southend (left) and showing solidarity with Mick

Manuel Cortes, general secretary of the TSSA, but talking to ASLEF's annual conference as president of the Greece Solidarity Campaign, told delegates: 'In Greece first they protested, then they organised, then they got together to make a political movement, then they won the country! People were literally dancing in the streets when the election results were announced! The politics of hope defeated the politics of fear and that is a lesson for the people of this country because a victory for the people of Greece is a victory for you and me.'

'Because I don't think we lost the general election because we were too left-wing. In fact, I think we were too timid. The truth is we lost because we didn't have the sense of community, and organisation, that they have in Greece. People in trade unions were the base of the Labour Party but we are five million fewer than we were. We need to speak out and we need to branch out. We need to look at new ways of organising in Britain.'

CONGRATULATIONS

● To **Andy Botham**, who polled 10,761 votes in Derbyshire Dales, increasing Labour's share of the vote to 22.7%. Andy finished second to Tory Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin, but well ahead of UKIP, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens.

● To **Tom Corbin**, who polled 7,771 votes, and increased Labour's share of the vote to 15.3% in Salisbury. Tom finished second behind the sitting Conservative, John Glen, but ahead of UKIP, the Lib Dems, the Greens, and King Arthur Pendragon who stood as an Independent.

● To **Howard Kaye**, who increased Labour's share of the vote to 9.5% in South West Surrey. Howard got 5,415 votes, just a couple of hundred behind UKIP, and well clear of the Lib Dems, the Greens, and a National Health Action candidate who spoiled his chances of making even greater inroads into Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt's Conservative majority.

THAT'S HANDY, ANDY: Andy Hudd, who was elected executive committee member for District 7 in August when Brian Corbett resigned to become district organiser, has been re-elected unopposed for a full term on the EC.

Marching on May Day

ASLEF activists from around the country joined national organiser Simon Weller, EC vice-president Dave Calfe, executive committee member Hugh Bradley, and district organisers Finn Brennan, Dicky Fisher, Nigel Gibson and Graham Morris on the traditional May Day march and rally in London. Members met at midday on Clerkenwell Green, an area with strong radical roots – Wat Tyler camped here during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and George Loveless, first of the Tolpuddle Martyrs to return to Britain after transportation to Australia, was welcomed home here with a mass meeting in 1838 – before moving off at 1pm, behind the Big Red brass band, with activists from other trade unions, workers from other countries, pensioners, students, and anti-globalisation



Holding the ASLEF banners high



campaigners, through central London to a rally in Trafalgar Square. Speakers under Nelson's watchful eye included Paul Nowak, assistant general secretary of

the TUC; Mary Turner, president of the GMB; John Hilary, director of War on Want; Matt Wrack, general secretary of the FBU; and Mark Serwotka, GS of the PCS.

ON A MISSION

Ben Ford, a Great Northern driver and member of our Cambridge branch, organised a go-kart grand prix which raised £1,220 for Mission Motorsport, a charity which helps rehabilitate wounded service veterans. Ben, who began racing karts in memory of two train drivers who died tragically young, was praised by Major James Cameron. He said: 'We are enormously grateful to Ben because every penny raised makes a huge difference.'

Looks good for h&s at FLHH

The latest Freightliner Heavy Haul full staff side took place in Birmingham on 30 April. It was an ideal opportunity for lead officer Nigel Gibson and the business council to update reps on developments within the company, including news about our new owners Genesee & Wyoming. Nigel explained how keen they are on health & safety and said there will probably be changes to reflect this. A presentation was made to Les Harrison, long standing LLC rep for Scotland, who is standing down. He has been an excellent rep and seen many changes, especially in Scotland. We wish him well.

Paul Barber, FLHH BC secretary

CONFERENCES

The **Durham Miners' Gala** is on Saturday 11 July. The **Tolpuddle Martyrs' festival**, near Dorchester, is from Friday 17 to Sunday 19 July. The **Burston strike school rally** is at Burston, near Diss, in Norfolk on Sunday 6 September. The **Trades Union Congress** is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 13 to Wednesday 16 September and the **Labour Party conference** is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 27 to Wednesday 30 September.

Off the rails



PAUL ROUTLEDGE, who writes a page on politics in the *Daily Mirror* every Friday, is a railway buff. He was born and brought up in Railway Terrace, Normanton, as he explained in an article in the *Journal* (October

2013) 'among drivers, shunters, guards, firemen, porters, clerks, signalmen, and even the odd BR policeman.' As an industrial correspondent on *The Times*, *The Observer*, and *The Independent*, he knew and drank with ASLEF stalwarts like Ray Buckton, Derek Fullick, Les Felton, Bill Ronksley, Ross Goff and Whispering Ted Miles. 'I thought I knew the meaning of the word envy,' wrote Paul in a centre page spread in the *Mirror* last month. 'That was before I clapped eyes on Pete Waterman's unique collection of model steam engines.' Paul got his hands on the music mogul's model railway trains before they went under the hammer for £627,229 at Dreweatts and Bloomsbury Auctions in London. The man who set Kylie Minogue on her way to pop success confessed that when he left school in 1963 he got a job at the engine sheds in Stafford Road, Wolverhampton. 'They said, "You look like a fireman" and that was it. I spent three weeks going up and down the sidings learning how to fire, then I was on the footplate with a shovel. I was crap!' Pete spent 14 months on the footplate before going to work at GEC in Coventry, where he became a T&G convenor, and then a DJ. But he never lost his love for the iron road.



SIR PETER HENDY, commissioner of Transport for London, which runs bus and Tube services in the capital, has condemned the privatised TOCs running commuter services into London, describing

them as 'shit'. Sir Peter, in a gloves-off interview with the magazine *Management Today*, said: 'People hate the suburban rail service, they hate it. If you make a mistake on your Oyster card on the Tube, we'll refund it. On South West Trains, they'll fine you. That's a big philosophical difference. On Southeastern, the trains are like the Wild West. They are shit, awful. And then people who look like the Gestapo get on and fine everyone they can. It doesn't improve your day, does it?' Getting into the groove, Sir Peter then had a pop at Mark Carne and Network Rail. 'The chief exec is a nice bloke and he has this idea about the digital railway and getting the most out of the railway in the next 30 years but no one is listening because they can't fix London Bridge.'



VLADIMIR MCTAVISH, the stand-up comic writing in the *Scottish Left Review*, was much amused by the claim of Ruth Davidson, leader of the Scottish Conservative Party, that the Tory vote was 'holding up well' north of the border. 'That's like the chairman of Albion Rovers celebrating the same number of season ticket sales as last year, or Rangers fans saying, "Brilliant, we're in no more shite today than we were yesterday".'

500 Club: Brian Corbett, with number 99, won the May draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £352. Well done, Brian!

ASLEF delegates a breath of fresh Ayr

GERRY DOYLE of Yoker branch reports from the Scottish Trades Union Congress at Ayr racecourse in April

IT WAS with great pleasure that I took the opportunity to be part of the ASLEF delegation at the STUC in Ayr. The event was very well attended and I was most impressed by the professionalism of all over the three days. The ASLEF delegation was very strong and included GS Mick Whelan; Kevin Lindsay, District Organiser, Scotland; Hugh Bradley, executive committee member for District 2; James McGowan; head of policy; Paul Patmore, BEM; Chris Barrie and me.

June Minnery, GMB, president of congress 2015, made the opening address which was followed by a series of motions and addresses on many and varying issues. The day ended with a rousing speech by Ed Miliband who ensured we were left in no doubt that another Tory government would leave the workers with no future. We then attended a meeting on rebalancing the economy with Mick Whelan as speaker. Mick spoke passionately, in his own

inimitable style, on the subject of HS2 and his belief that HS2 should include the whole of the UK, not limited to regions, thus providing growth and benefit for all.

Day two opened with a powerful speech from SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon on social justice and rights for all – with an emphasis on Scotland and its powers – followed by several motions from the ASLEF delegation on current issues including the future of energy provision, Cuba, and a powerful motion on the recent ScotRail franchise award and why it was – and still is – the perfect candidate to be brought back to public ownership.

Guest speakers included a Colombian trade union delegation who roused congress with a moving presentation on the horrific trials of Colombian workers who want to live in a fair and just society which demonstrated the terror of a worker's life in a country without democracy.

As a first time delegate and speaker I found it an honour to be part of the ASLEF delegation. It was a humbling experience to be a part of an organisation (ASLEF) whose opinions and support were sought and valued by delegations in attendance. I would like to thank all my ASLEF colleagues who made me feel part of the delegation and also the NUM delegation for their advice and comradeship. I would encourage any ASLEF member, if and when you have the opportunity to get involved, to grasp it and be a part of your union.

QUOTE...

'The Greens promise the earth because they know they're not going to inherit it.' – **Paul Routledge of the Daily Mirror**

...UNQUOTE

TERROR THREAT TO ERTMS

The European Rail Traffic Management System, the hi-tech signalling project which will, eventually, control Britain's railways, could be hacked to cause a major disaster, according to a scientist who advises the government. Professor David Stupples says plans to replace traditional signals with new computers will leave the network exposed to cyber attacks by terrorists and hackers. 'If someone hacked into the system they could cause a nasty accident or major disruption,' he said. 'Clever malware [malicious software] alters the way the train will respond. So it will perhaps tell the system the train is slowing down, when it's speeding up.'

Network Rail acknowledges the threat. 'We know the risk [of a cyber attack] will increase as we roll out digital technology,' said a spokesman.



ASLEF delegates to STUC 2015 (above left); Gerry Doyle (top right), Chris Barrie (left) and Paul Patmore (above) address congress; and Mick (above right) speaks about rebalancing the economy at the Unions 21 fringe meeting

Station to station

Construction work on the £6.5 billion Thameslink project near London Bridge has uncovered a ghost station that closed 100 years ago. Southwark Park station, perched on a viaduct over



Part of the old Southwark Park station in Bermondsey, south London

Rotherhithe New Road, was only open from 1902 to 1915. But workers rebuilding the railway in Bermondsey have rediscovered the old platforms and old ticket hall.

Railwaymen strike over privatisation

The National Federation of Indian Railwaymen, the trade union which represents four out of five of the 1.3 million workers on Indian Railways, has called a nationwide strike to protest about the government's plan to allow private participation in railway projects on the sub-continent. 'The strike will bring to a halt 19,000 trains across the nation, beginning at 6am on 23 November, which will impact on 20 million passengers,' said federation spokesman SN Malik. Workers and passengers want the railway which has, for 162 years, since 1853, been 'the preferred mode of transport for the nation', to stay in the public sector. ASLEF has been advising the federation about the deleterious effects of privatisation on the rail industry here in Britain.



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Faster than a speeding bullet

THE hi-tech high speed Japanese maglev train has set a new world record by travelling at just over 600km/h. The seven-car state-of-the-art maglev – short for magnetic levitation – reached 603km/h (375mph) in what engineers described as a ‘comfortable’ zip along a test track near Mount Fuji on 21 April. The experimental train, carrying 49 Central Japan Railway Company employees, covered 1.8 kilometres in just under 11 seconds at more than 600km/h. ‘The ride was comfortable and stable,’ said test centre head Yasukazu Endo. ‘We will continue analysing data and make use of it in designing the cars.’

Maglev trains are much faster than



The world record-breaking Japanese maglev train (left) and the Italian testarossa (right)



Japan's famous bullet trains, which travel at 320kph (200mph). They use a form of magnetic levitation to ‘float’ above the tracks, which minimises friction and allows them to travel faster. The trains will eventually comprise 16 carriages, carrying 1,000 passengers, and should be in service between Tokyo and Nagoya by 2027.

Meanwhile, Italian president Sergio Mattarella bagged a seat on the inaugural

journey of Europe's fastest production train, the eight-car Frecciarossa 1000, from Milan to Rome on 25 April. Trenitalia commuter services start on 14 June with six trains a day, travelling at up to 400km/h, taking 2 hours 55 minutes to run between the two cities.

Trains on the HS1 line connecting London to the Channel Tunnel through Kent achieve speeds of 186mph and, on the planned HS2 line, are expected to reach 225mph.

London calling

ASLEF activists gathered near Waterloo last month to hear why it is important for members to sign up as affiliated supporters of the Labour Party. Affiliated supporter is a new category of party membership established for union members after the Collins review. The meeting was arranged for

members living in the Greater London Authority area to outline the importance of voting in the selection process to decide who will be Labour's candidate in the election for London Mayor in 2016; the deadline to register to vote in this contest is 19 June 2015.

Former London Mayor Ken Livingstone highlighted how union members will have a stronger voice within the



Mick, Marz and Ken sign up for Labour in London

party should they register as affiliated supporters while general secretary Mick Whelan emphasised that a vote on who should be the party's candidate is a vote for the next boss of Transport for

London.

The meeting also heard from national organiser Simon Weller, DO8 Finn Brennan, EC1 Marz Colombini and a number of branch secretaries and activists.

QUOTE...

‘Asked to define Tory democracy, Randolph Churchill said it was “opportunism, mostly.” But it was more. It was giving workers the tea break, and so on, while always remaining, on the whole, a steady defender of free markets.’ – Boris Johnson, The Churchill Factor

...UNQUOTE

BRIDGE AT UFTON NERVET

Network Rail is to replace the level crossing at Ufton Nervet, where seven people died and 71 were injured in a crash in 2004, in Berkshire with a bridge to separate road and rail traffic.



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Opening up a new world of learning

NICK MEAGHER, a driver with South West Trains, and ULR at Staines, reports on our union learning rep development seminar

U NION learning reps from around the country gathered at Jurys Inn, Croydon, for a development seminar organised by the ASLEF education project team. The day gave reps a chance to talk about the challenges we face as well as bringing us up to speed on the changes modern means of training are bringing to the workplace.

Project co-ordinator Shirley Handsley introduced GS Mick Whelan who spoke about how the role of the learning rep has changed and about the union's constant battle with freight and train operators to prevent the undermining and dumbing down of the driver's role by introducing new – and quicker – training schemes. Mick also presented Alastair Kristofferson with our learner of the year award.

Alastair, of Yoker branch, joined the railway in 2009 and passed out as a driver with ScotRail a year later. He signed up for two creative writing courses in 2014 and went on to complete two more. I've read some of his stories and can see why he's been

asked to read at events like the STUC's May Day celebrations. His stories are short, but gripping, and leave you wanting more. A very deserving talent!

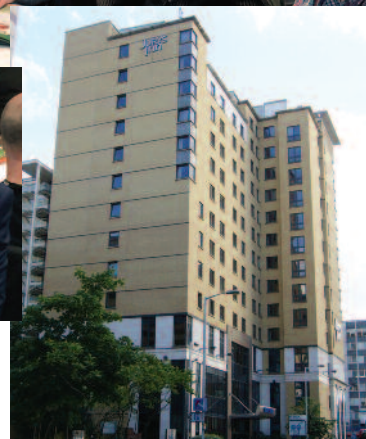
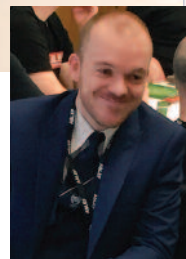
Mark Lester talked about MOOCs – massive open online courses – a term we will be hearing a lot as colleges put learning online and education embraces the digital age. With Future Learn you can take part in online courses for free and only pay if you require certification at the end. Future Learn, run by the Open University, offers courses to appeal to all ages. Sign up and you have access to live events, tutors and other students online. So if online learning appeals to you, talk to your ULR.

Sally Hilton spoke about the national numeracy challenge. 'Numeracy,' she said, 'is the use of maths in everyday life.' ASLEF is promoting the NNC and members will be asked by learning reps to take the challenge online. There's no pressure as there is no pass or fail! But the benefits of improving your numeracy are clear – it makes life much easier.

Sarah Loates, a lecturer at Derby University, ran a workshop on continuing professional development – or lifelong learning – which is something, as train drivers, we do throughout our career, by learning new stock and equipment, and Nicole



The jury's in for ULRs (above) and learner of the year Alastair Kristofferson (right)



Pickett led another on mental health first aid to help reps recognise how we become vulnerable to stress as life changes around us.

District 8 Officer Finn Brennan spoke about the massive problem a Conservative victory at the general election would have on union learning and praised the work of learning reps for opening up new sets of skills to members and bringing a 'new world of learning' to all grades.

The last speaker on a thought-

provoking day was national union development worker Keith Lewis who spoke about funding and the jobs lost because of cuts being made to the union learning project. 'The ASLEF project secured funding,' he said, 'because the results were there.' The ASLEF education team work very hard to keep learning on the minds of train and freight operators.

QUOTE...

'The banking collapse in 2008 and the subsequent bailing out of many of the banks with taxpayers' money more or less marked the end of neo-liberalism. Trouble is, neo-liberalism never noticed.' – **Martin Rowson in *The Coalition Book (Self Made Hero, £19.99)* his wonderfully waspish collection of political cartoons from the last five years**

...UNQUOTE

Think pink

ASLEF activists – all of them women, most of them Tube drivers – joined the Labour Party's pink election battle bus on its tour of London. They met Harriet

Harman, deputy party leader; Diane Abbott, MP for Hackney North & Stoke Newington; Val Shawcross, London Assembly Member for Lambeth &



Off the bus and in the café for tea with ASLEF

Southwark; and Amy Lamé, Labour's candidate in Dulwich & West Norwood. One driver said she thought more women didn't apply because 'the job isn't

very glamorous' but Harriet said 'being an MP is worse!' They all agreed that more needs to be done to make the rail workforce reflect 21st century Britain.

ROMANTIC JOURNEY TO THE SOUL OF BRITAIN'S RAILWAY



In his new book *The Trains Now Departed* (Preface, £20) Michael Williams, author of *On the Slow Train* and *Steaming to Victory: How Britain's Railways Won the*

War, conjures up the ghosts of the golden age by revisiting the railway lines, and the trains that ran on them, and the crumbling platforms, viaducts, embankments and tunnels – the legacy that's been lost – of Britain.



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Policy making parliament

A SLEF's Annual Assembly of Delegates – our annual conference – was held from Tuesday 12 to Friday 15 May at the Park Inn Palace on the seafront in Southend-on-Sea which, with its golden mile of hot dogs, hamburgers, amusement arcades, dodgy discos, the world's longest pier and the Adventure Island fun park, promotes itself as the Las Vegas of south-east England. Southend is where east London goes to play, where leather-jacketed rockers rode their motorbikes on bank holidays in the 1960s and '70s – parka-clad mods preferred to take their scooters to Clacton – and where Essex still goes to get its kicks. Not on Route 66 but at the end of the A13.

AAD is ASLEF's parliament, the foundation of our union's democratic structure. 'This is the most important body of ASLEF,' said Tosh McDonald, in his



president's address to delegates. 'You make the policy that we carry out.' Every branch has the right to propose changes and the chance to send a delegate to the place where we make policy and establish our priorities and plans for the year ahead. It was four days of passionate discussion and debate, of wonderful speeches and warm comradeship, as train drivers came together from all around the country to share problems and swap tales of triumph.



Delegates at AAD. Conference photos by James Barnett



We have the industrial strength and muscle

Executive committee president Tosh McDonald, in his address on Tuesday morning, told delegates: 'We suffered a defeat at the general election on Thursday, no point in pretending we didn't. For the first time since 1997 we have a Tory government with a majority. But we don't need to throw it all away. Because to come back and fight, and not to run away, is the ASLEF way.'

'The easy option, ten years ago, when this union was in serious trouble, would have been to fold and merge with another



The EC president isn't running away

union. But we didn't. And that's just one of the reasons why I am proud, as president, to be sitting alongside Mick Whelan, one of the best general secretaries in the history of this great union.

'The people of Scotland turned to the SNP because Labour wasn't bold enough. Labour didn't stand

against austerity, Labour stood for austerity light. But I want to thank every member who went out, in line with ASLEF policy, to try and deliver a Labour government. We failed this time but we have five years to regroup and have another go.

'Because we have the industrial strength and the industrial muscle to deliver the goods. We have just secured a four year deal at Southeastern. four years of inflation-busting pay rises, that takes Southeastern through four-fifths of this Tory government. That's a shining light to how ASLEF works.

'District 8 faces turmoil with the challenge of 24 hour working announced by Boris Johnson and his cronies in TfL. But they are going to have to sit down and negotiate with ASLEF or they won't have any trains running. And if they need to take action this year then they will have the full support of ASLEF.'

Tosh concluded by telling delegates: 'AAD is the most important body of ASLEF. You make the policy that we carry out. We'll have disagreements. Sometimes they get quite heated. And they should. But then we go and have a drink. And that's how it should be...'

The best cockles and mussels in the world

Tony West, national secretary of our Retired Members' Section, officially opened AAD. 'It's not Southend,' he said. 'It's Sarfend! Best cockles and mussels in



Tony West of the RMS with GS Mick Whelan

the world! I've been a member of this trade union for 53 years. I joined the railway in 1955 at Stratford, the biggest depot in Britain, and probably Europe, at the time. Took me ten years to become a driver, because it was dead men's shoes. Engine cleaner, fireman, then driver. I went to Stratford branch to listen, to learn, and to participate. I was elected LDC at Stratford; was District Secretary for five years; and AGS for six. I served five years on Bexley council, in opposition, and learned that, however good your speeches, however sound your ideas, when you're in opposition, you achieve nothing. But I wouldn't have achieved anything if I hadn't been in ASLEF because I believe we belong to the finest trade union in this country.'



Battle on for the soul of the party

'There is nothing so ex,' it's often said, 'as an ex-MP'. Many former Members of Parliament went off to lick their wounds, especially in Scotland where so many hard-working Labour MPs were swept away by the nationalist tide. But Katy Clark, an excellent MP for North Ayrshire & Arran from 2005 to 2015, is made of sterner stuff. She turned up on Tuesday, as promised, to a very warm welcome as she set out her plans for the future of the labour movement. Katy urged us turn our back on Tony Blair and New Labour; called for a separate Scottish Labour Party; and asked the unions to help build a broad socialist campaign to take on the Conservative government.

'Make no mistake,' she said. 'They will be coming for us. We need to build a movement against what the Tories are going to do to us. The unions are going to have to mount a defence to the massive attacks that are coming from this Tory government. I may no longer be an MP but I am still proud to be part of the labour movement and I will be working for the return of a Labour government.'

'The Labour Party has not been connected to the people it should have been representing for a very long time. It goes back to the New Labour project, the failure to take on the privatisations, and the war in Iraq.'

'We need to seriously assess where we are and put forward a strategy that will win people back. In Scotland that means having a separate Labour Party, deciding its own policy, because the policies coming out of Westminster do not relate to



Mick Whelan (GS not Marylebone) thanks Katy for coming to AAD

what people in Scotland want. They don't relate to what people want in England, either. I was told by the Labour whips that every policy had to be about winning Middle England, winning those seats, the interests of my constituents weren't the most important thing. But I know that many people in this country, in England, have similar interests as those communities I represented.'

Asked how Labour can rebuild after its devastating defeat, Katy said: 'We need to get a lot more people to join the Labour Party

QUOTE...

'Legal decisions are political decisions in a different place.' – **Keith Ewing, Professor of Public Law at King's College, London**

...UNQUOTE

because the party in Scotland has been hollowed out. I stood to be deputy leader of the Scottish Labour Party and was unsuccessful because I was

perceived to be too left-wing. The Scottish Labour Party is the party of the cities, the party of the middle-class. We need to build the Labour Party in Scotland so it reflects the people it needs to represent.

'Voting Labour isn't enough. We have to rebuild the movement. The range of candidates for the leadership won't be broad but we will get a choice. An ideological battle and a political battle have been going on in the Labour Party for a very long time.'

'We also have a numbers problem in the Labour Party. There aren't enough of us! We need to get involved because unless we have socialists and trade unionists in there fighting we don't have a hope of defeating New Labour once and for all.'

Jim Baxter, of Motherwell, said: 'Labour says the electorate isn't listening. No! The Labour Party isn't listening. We need to get rid of Jim Murphy.' Katy said: 'It's not just the message, but the messenger, and Jim Murphy should consider his position.'

SUNDAY MORNING

Conference voted for an agenda item moved by Hussein Ezzedine, of Edinburgh No 1, for the executive committee 'to pursue a high profile campaign to educate and inform the membership' about the benefits of incorporating Sundays into a four-day working week to achieve a 32 hour four-day week over the yearly roster cycle. Cliff Holloway, Euston, said: 'Let's face it, we're all here as a result of stepping into a dead man's shoes – someone who has passed on, been sacked, or who has retired.' GS Mick Whelan said: 'We should be looking to include Sunday in the working week, to help youth employment.'

DRIVING TRAINS IS NOT A HOBBY

Dave Calfe, EC vice-president, said: 'I know people who drive passenger trains during the week and freight trains at the weekend because, they say, "I like driving big engines." It's not a hobby, driving trains. It's a job. It's

employment for men and women who have families to feed. People shouldn't be taking the bread out of other people's mouths.'

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Phil Sparkes of Eastleigh and Debbie Reay of the Women's Representatives Committee stood for vice-chair. Phil got 36 votes; Debbie 34, with 2 abstentions.

BACKING THE NPC

Conference voted to donate £500 to the National Pensioners' Convention. Chris Sneddon, of Wimbledon, said: 'We should support the pensioners today because we'll all be pensioners one day.'

SAFETY NET

Chris Langer, CIRAS scheme intelligence manager, addressed AAD about the role, 'as a safety net,' in the railway industry, of the Confidential Reporting System.



What do we want, where do we go, how do we get there?



KEITH EWING, Professor of Public Law at King's College, London, president of the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom, and a long-standing proponent of progressive politics, believes trade unions face the biggest crisis of the post-war period – and declared candidates for the Labour Party leadership offer very little hope.

IN A thoughtful, and thought-provoking, speech on Wednesday, which went down a storm, he analysed the meaning of the crushing election defeat on 7 May for the movement and spelled out a few truths.

'When I joined the workforce 82% of British workers were covered by a collective agreement. Now it's 20%. That's a shocking decline in collective bargaining coverage and the number of people we are reaching. But we need to be realistic because I believe we are facing the biggest crisis for trade unionism in my lifetime.

'We were all shocked by the

result – but we shouldn't be surprised. Because if we look at the lessons of history, especially since the Second World War, it's typical for a government, especially a Tory government, to get a second term. The Tory government elected in 1951 stayed in office until 1964. The Tory government elected in 1979 stayed in until 1997. Once they get into power it's very, very hard to get them out. We've elected a Tory government, with the brakes off, for the next ten years.

'The Labour Party is about to go into civil war and will not be ready for government in five years' time. We should hope for a Labour government – but prepare for a long haul against a new Tory

hegemony.'

Keith turned his attention to the next Labour leader and he wasn't optimistic here, either. 'Can I be optimistic about the future of the Labour Party when we look at the candidates to be leader? Look at them! They cannot get down on their knees low enough to bend down in front of big business.' He added: 'We underestimate the Tories. They have a strategy and a plan that we don't. They take politics seriously – and they're very good at it.'

Then he spelled out what he thinks the Tories have in store for trade unions. 'The Tory manifesto uses the words trade unions more often than the Labour manifesto, and not in a pleasant way. The right to recruit, organise and represent workers? They are going to look at the way subscriptions are collected and there will be attacks on check-offs and facility time, used to target the PCS.

'Provisions relating to industrial



action. Strike ballots – every union is going to have to get a 50% turn out for the ballot to be legal; 25% plus 1 for industrial action. For health, education, fire and transport an additional requirement that 40% of those eligible to vote will have to vote in favour of industrial action. We can complain about this as much as we like. It's anti-democratic, adopting the practices of Bulgaria and Romania, the only two countries with a similar hurdle. The Tory vote at the last election was 37% of those voting but only 25% of those eligible to vote. Yet they claim a mandate to impose this threshold on unions like ASLEF. And there will be new strike-breaking laws to

Don't give up on Labour



Lucy with Mick

Lucy Anderson, MEP for London, told delegates on Friday there were two main reasons Labour lost the election: 'A whipping up of nationalism, in England, to terrify people from voting Labour, which we saw on the

doorsteps in the last days of the campaign. And we didn't have a clear and forceful enough argument on the economy, in terms of arguing for jobs and infrastructure. Every pound spent on investment in transport brings £4 in return but we didn't have a strong enough narrative on that.

'As someone on the left of the Labour Party, the link with the trade union movement is very

important. People say Ed Miliband was too left-wing. You will think he wasn't left-wing enough and, in some ways, I agree. We lost at least 19 seats because of votes going to TUSC and the Greens. Nancy Platts lost, to the Tories, in the key marginal of Brighton Kemptown because so many votes went to the Greens. We didn't lose because our policies were too left-wing. Please don't give up on the Labour Party. There is a distinct move to the left in the PLP and a better gender balance. The next London Mayor is vital and it is there for us to win. We need someone to beat the right-wing and I am backing Sadiq Khan.

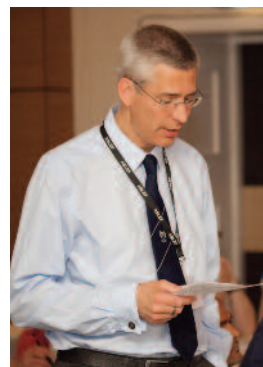
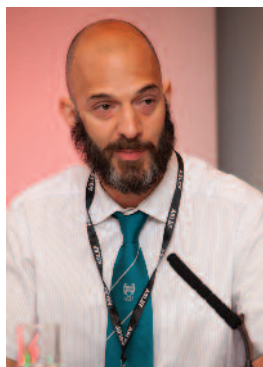
'Some of the candidates for Labour leader have more commitment to an anti-austerity message than others. The only two who worry the Tories are Yvette Cooper and Andy Burnham.'

QUOTE...

'There's a big, big fight coming up on the Underground. And it will be coming to you before long.' – **Ben Wallington, LGBT**

'None of these companies have got any assets. They're just here to make the milk.' – **Philip Devonport, Marylebone**

...UNQUOTE





Keith: 'Prepare for the long haul'

allow agency workers to do the work of those on strike.

'Political action. There will be new controls. Legislation for a system of opting into political subscriptions, rather than opting out. Very simple measures designed to strike at the heart of our organisational, industrial

and political capacities.'

Membership in the movement is in steady decline. 'In 1978 I was one of 13 million trade unionists and I am now one of only six million. Our collective bargaining structures are collapsing. Our political voice will be muted as the Labour Party engages in civil war. Our options are constrained. We can challenge them in the courts but the RMT lost an important case in the European Court of Human Rights and Unison lost an important case in the High Court.

'My message, looking forward, is to think about where it is we want to be, as a movement, as a union, not tomorrow, but in ten years' time. What do we want to be doing – and how do we want to get there?'

He added: 'Yesterday was the day in 1926 when workers went back to work and left the miners on their own. And I say that with some feeling as my grandfather was one of those miners. This is not a time for a simple, naïve response, but for hard thinking, and hard decisions, so we can leave a better movement to our children.'

Right to strike

GS Mick Whelan spoke in support of a motion moved by Leytonstone, seconded by Bakerloo line, about the right to strike. Mick said: 'It's every worker's right to withdraw his or her labour. There is no right to strike in UK law but we believe in the right to strike and we will work to defend our right to strike. Because there is no fairness in this. There are no sanctions for employers who behave badly. That's why we are calling on the TUC to run a

campaign against this proposed law.

'There's a public perception that we're always out on strike. But whenever I challenge anyone to tell me when we were last on strike they can't do it. Because we don't want to cost ourselves money or cause inconvenience to the travelling public. We only call a strike as a last resort.

'But we know where the Tories are coming from on this. They want to ban trade unions. There used to be two



Mick: 'We know where they're coming from'

trade union seats on the TfL board. Boris Johnson withdrew them. That's his template for a future Tory administration if he's elected leader. And it won't work, anyway. It would only take us back to the days of wildcat strikes.'



A view of the chair with the EC vice-president, president, and GS

THE VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Mark Daniels, Barking main line, was elected unopposed as chair of AAD. He said he was 'very proud, as a Southend boy,' but rather spoiled it by dryly adding: 'We have the four Ss here in Southend – the sun, the sea, the sand... and the sewage which floats by here on its way to the sea.' Mark, 42, a driver with C2C, on the railway for 23 years, had a nice line in wry throwaway remarks, as speakers made their way to and from the podium, which was greatly appreciated by delegates who admired the way he did what can be a difficult job. 'I think conference went well. Some good decisions. AAD is important because it's the bedrock of this union and trade unions are more important, now, than ever. I'm a big believer in social justice and that's what trade unions are all about.'

THE VIEW FROM ST PANCRAS

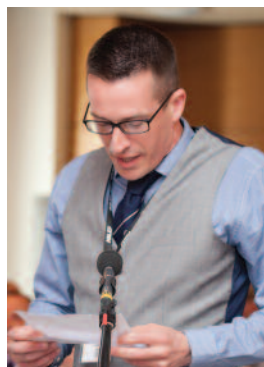
Emily Malcher, 35, who drives for London Overground, has been on the railway for seven years. 'I visited AAD in Brighton last year and was sat at the back wanting to speak. All the delegates were friendly and approachable, happy to explain what was going on. So this year I thought I'd step forward and represent the branch at AAD. It was nerve-wracking, going to the podium to speak, but Liz Cocks came with me the first day – she wrote the items and helped me prepare – and the guys, and girls, have been so helpful. I know more and have made a lot of friends. I'd say to anyone thinking of having a go, come to conference as a visitor, see what goes on, and get involved. It's not all political and you'll have a real good time!'



Emily studies the form book

THE VIEW FROM EXETER

Ryan Howe, 40, who drives for First Great Western, and has been on the railway for 24 years, was attending his first AAD. 'To put a point across, personal to me, but relevant to other people, about safety on the line.' In a poignant piece on personal testimony on Thursday, which ended with the room rising to applaud his courage in speaking out, Ryan explained the effects on his life of a fatality at Ufton Nervet. 'I was apprehensive, but we have all had one, or know someone who has. We go into train driver mode, to the best of our ability, but what is not understood is how it affects your family. I've had a great week, talking to brilliant, intelligent people, within the grade. It's a shame more people don't come and visit and have a look. I'd urge everyone to come.'



POA: What sort of a society do we want?

STEVE GILLAN, general secretary of the Prison Officers' Association, came to Southend the day after his own conference closed in Southport. He said: 'ASLEF is a fighting, campaigning union, great supporters of the miners' strike of '84-'85 and if the whole trade union movement had got behind the miners, like ASLEF, history would have been very different. Now we're about to reap what 11 million Tory voters have sown.'

'Why did it go wrong for the Labour Party? Because they weren't listening to ordinary working people, so ordinary working people abandoned them. For Labour to leave a gap for UKIP is disgraceful! The candidates put up for the Labour leadership do not inspire confidence. We don't need a lurch to the right.'

'Some people said the Labour manifesto was a lurch to the left. Getting rid of zero hour

contracts and the employment tribunal tariff and building new homes? Is that a lurch to the left? No! It's treating people properly, in a civilised manner.'

'What sort of society do we want? It's back to the Thatcher "I'm all right, Jack" society. A society of the haves and have nots. That's why unions like ASLEF, the POA, and the RMT are so important.'

'My union does not have the right to take strike action. Although we have taken strike action! They can have all the legislation in the world but, when my members think it is right to take action, then we will take industrial action. Ignore the new laws. In a collective manner. The only way trade unions will win is by standing together.'



Trade union twins: Steve and Mick

QUOTE...

'The result of the general election was a disaster, and we need to face that. But it's given us an opportunity to change the Labour Party.' – Nick Whitehead

...UNQUOTE

Fill in your death in service form

Dave Tyson, trustee director of the Railways Pension Scheme since 2001, reported: 'The RPS has 89,000 active members; 140,000 pensioners; and 108,000 deferred members. In the year to 31 December 2014, £943 million was paid out in pensions, lump sums, and death benefits. The value of the scheme stood at £21.65 billion, an increase of £1.54 billion on the previous year, and considerably higher than the £17.7 billion of 2011.' He added: 'This is not a pleasant request, but it is important. Only half our



Dave Tyson: Plea to members

members fill in a form. So please get your colleagues to fill in their death in service nomination forms and, if possible, get them to make a will!'

THANKS, NIGEL: Cliff Holloway, Euston, led delegates in a vote of thanks to finance manager Nigel Gooch on his imminent retirement. 'Back in 2006 at AAD there was a hell of a lot of turmoil and finger pointing. Nigel spelled out the problems and said that, unless we resolved those problems, "You as a trade union are finished." The advice he gave us then influenced me to do the right thing for ASLEF.'

AUDITOR'S REPORT: Mark Daniels gave the trustee report on the auditor's report before Phil Clark presented the auditor's report to conference. 'It's great that the union is on such a sound financial footing,' said John Glazebrook of Portsmouth & Isle of Wight.

RULE BOOK AMENDMENTS: Two amendments to the rule book, proposed by the EC, were passed unanimously. The first changes contributions to the political fund from 2.5% to 4%. The second ensures that no part of contributions paid by members who have exercised their right to opt out will be paid into the political fund and the whole of their contributions will remain in the general fund.

THEY'RE COMING FOR OUR PENSIONS: 'Pensions are going to be the next big battleground,' said national organiser Simon Weller. 'Because make no mistake, after the general election result, they're coming for our pensions.'



Kenneth Nemachena

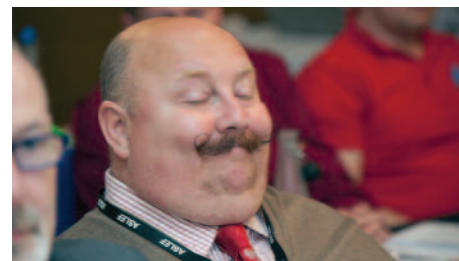
Common enemy

Kenneth Nemachena, general secretary of the Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railway Workers' Union, told delegates: 'As workers we all fight our common enemy, the employer. As you deliberate your motions, it is my plea that you must give the vision of your union, and keep the members you represent at your hearts, so you achieve your mission and your goals.'

QUOTE...

'You can work an extra hour on Sunday because God's with you. That's what the companies say.' – Ryan Howe, Exeter

...UNQUOTE



Let's work together

MICK CASH, general secretary of the RMT, brought fraternal greetings from the RMT when he addressed delegates on Wednesday. He said: 'We've just called the first national rail strike in 20 years, at Network Rail, and one of the lessons of our movement is that, when the Tories attack us, we overcome them. They are trying to put proposals in to make sure we can't take industrial action, but we got 80% in favour. So that's two fingers to them! And that's what we are going to have to continue to do for the next five years.'

'We can analyse as much as we want why Labour didn't get in – Scotland, the electoral system, whatever – but for us, as trade unions, it's business as usual. We get on with representing our members whether they are Liberal Democrat Tories or just Tory Tories in government. We are going to continue fighting and make the argument for public ownership.'

'I get annoyed at Peter Mandelson coming along and talking about the centre ground because I know that aspiration comes from being progressive and from having public ownership. We're not an affiliated union, although I will get a vote, because I have been a member of the Labour Party since 1982. Politically, the Labour Party was always part of a movement, but it became an election-winning vehicle which, when it got into power, didn't know what it wanted to do.'

'Getting ordinary working people into the House of Commons is crucial. Until they resigned all the party leaders were ex-spads and, as drivers, I



Mick Cash: Two fingers to Tories

know you don't like SPADs. Signals passed at danger. Or special advisers! I can't see, in my time as GS, that we will get back into the Labour Party. Because we have a huge problem with a party born out of our movement endorsing policies that work against this movement.'

Then Mick turned to the RMT's relations with ASLEF, which have not always been fraternal, especially over accusations of poaching drivers.

'Going forward, it's important we work together, we have a lot of history, some of it good, some of it bad. In the battles we face, we need to get better at working together. I want to put on record our thanks to ASLEF for the principled position ASLEF has taken on driver only operation. The employers want to divide and degrade and reduce our terms and conditions. I saw these words on an NUM banner: "The past we inherit, the future we build." So let's work together to build a better future.'

QUOTE...

'There will be no extension of driver only operation.' – **Tosh McDonald, EC president**

...UNQUOTE

Off the rails



ELLY BARNES of Educate & Celebrate, which works to make schools and workplaces LGBT-friendly, provided one of the high spots of the week when she led a sing-a-long and happy clap-a-long of delegates in *Different Things* from *Red Rockets and Rainbow Jelly* by Sue Heap: 'We might like different things... but we can still be friends.'

KEITH EWING, Professor of Public Law at King's College, London, has a nice line in black humour. After spelling out just how bad things could get under this Tory government, he paused, looked around the room, and smiled: 'You see, I'm from a Presbyterian background, so my glass isn't half empty, it's three-quarters empty...'

RAY JACKSON, that eloquent man, not the *Elephant Man*, who got a lot of laughs when he went to the podium and described himself as the 'angry old man of the RMS,' got more when he muttered: 'Peter Mandelson needs to be chucked out of the Labour Party, which is like a blocked sink. You need to unblock the sink and get rid of all the dirty stuff.'

RAB WICKSTED, Edinburgh No 2, was momentarily speechless when, having asked ZARWU GS Kenneth Nemachena a polite question, Ken, struggling with Rab's Scottish accent, said simply: 'Pardon?' Conference collapsed in laughter, picked up when Mark Wakenshaw, Gateshead & Newcastle, proposed a vote of thanks in broad Geordie.

SOUTHEND, originally the 'south end' of the village of Prittlewell, became associated, musically, over the years with Procul Harum, the Kursaal Flyers, Mickey Jupp, Eddie and the Hot Rods, Dr Feelgood, and Busted. On Thursday night delegates got down and dirty with *The Brit Invasion*, who played covers of first and second generation Brit bands such as Jeff Beck, the Small Faces, and the Jam.

■ RMS PLEDGE

'In the RMS we will continue to do what we're here for,' promised national secretary Tony West. 'To fight for the rights of pensioners because, at the end of the day, every one of us will, if we're lucky with our health, become a pensioner.'

■ THE RED FLAG

AAD ended, in the traditional way, with the singing of the *Red Flag*, led in a beautiful baritone by Rab Wicksted of Edinburgh No 2.

QUOTE...

'As my train came into London I noticed a funny smell. The smell of hypocrisy oozing out of Number 10.' –

Dave Tyson, trustee director of the Railways Pension Scheme

...UNQUOTE



Tony's tales of struggles past

Northern Line North had the great pleasure of welcoming Tony West, John Robson and Dave Press of the RMS to our branch meeting. Tony gave a passionate speech about the history and value of the RMS which has grown from 300 members in 1998 to 2,241 today. After the first year, which is free, the cost is just £15 a year, and for that you get a diary, the *Journal* and free initial representation from Thompsons solicitors.

Tony voiced concern about pensioners today and



All smiles for the RMS – and the gourmet burgers – at Northern Line North

in the future. There are currently 11.5 million in the country and 3 million of them are living below the poverty line. The number still working is now more than one million and will increase as many relying on the state pension (£114) have no alternative.

We need, said Tony, to encourage more young people to play an active part in ASLEF. We must make members aware that if

the government attacks our movement with more anti-union legislation then working people, the elderly and the sick will have no voice whatsoever in 21st century Britain.

We had a great night and enjoyed a drink or two in the bar after the meeting, where the RMS regaled us with tales of past struggles, and past adventures.

Deborah Reay,
branch secretary

Reps making the machinery work

District 8's health & safety conference drew a packed audience of LU h&s reps to hear Jill Collis, LU safety director; Keith Atkinson, principal inspector, ORR; Donna Morgans, occupational health, TfL; and DO Finn Brennan.

Jill described LU's operating context, the priorities of safety, reliability, future capacity and customer service, adding that LU's investment in asset maintenance would continue, with new trains, network re-signalling, and track replacement. She highlighted staff success in reducing risk and preventable accidents and led a lively discussion on safety leadership with reps contributing their experience in making the consultative safety machinery work.

Keith described his team's powers,

including authority to investigate and prosecute if necessary. He set out the employer's responsibilities to ensure employees' health, safety and welfare at work and of employees to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others. 'Is what is being done likely to cause harm? If yes, then we must act.'

Donna described improvements to night workers' health assessments, out of

hours medication advice, medical standards for vision and hearing and guidance for fitness to work. Conference applauded the new standards of medical assessment as good news for drivers with more likely to be assessed on their circumstances rather than being automatically disqualified from continuing their employment.

Kevin Croissant,
trains health & safety council



Andy Hourigan, the new EC member for District 3, did the honours by presenting long service badges to company council rep Paul Hart (30 years), Phil Moran (25), Colin Welsh (25) and Pam Gamble (20). Keith Devling, Kirkdale 121

Paul and Pam pick up their badges from Andy

Upcoming events

OLD OAK COMMON – TUESDAY 9 JUNE

Anyone with any OOC history is welcome at the retirement section's annual reunion from 13.00 to 16.00 at the AGV Club, Alwyn Gardens, Acton, London W3.

LEICESTER – SATURDAY 13 JUNE

Annual reunion at the Barley Mow, Granby Street, Leicester from 12.00. All retired and active members welcome. Contact Ray Worthy (07804 029149) for details.

● Please send your branch news and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

Lost at work

Every year, on 28 April, workers around the world gather for Workers' Memorial Day to commemorate those, sadly, lost in the workplace. District 3 gathered in Manchester to remember those no longer with us; we had some wonderful speakers, none more poignant than the two mothers who spoke after losing their sons to employers who neglected their safety and welfare. That's why health and safety reps carry out our role. All the trade unions laid



District 3 remembers the dead

wreaths after the names of those lost at work were read out. Sincere thanks to comrades for supporting the event, our friends at Thompsons in Manchester, and our EC member Andy Hourigan and District Organiser Colin Smith.

Alan Moss, Longsight



No unauthorised parking for Jubilee East (above) before Finn presents Roy Volume with his 25 year badge (right)

Jolly Jubilee

April's meeting of Jubilee East was a very jolly branch. Finn Brennan, the district organiser, was in attendance to report on the pay claim and Night Tube talks. LU must significantly increase what's on the table for this branch to be

happy. The branch made it clear we would be happy to take industrial action, should it be needed, to ensure a good deal for train operators across the combine. We also discussed how to improve communications as it's something we will need in battles on



the horizon. As this branch fell on my birthday, we had one or two social drinks afterwards.

Gary Comfort,
branch secretary



Dick Hardy, the old depot master, joined the Stewarts Lane old boys at the Selhurst club. Dick is in his 90s now and some of those who reported for duty are not far behind. One came all the way from Devon, and it was nice to see a couple of ladies choose to accompany their other halves and add a bit of glamour to the occasion.

Peter Smith, RMS



At Aylesbury's branch meeting DO7 Brian Corbett (second left) presented long service awards to Mark Williams (15 years), Dave Cooper (10), Simon Lake (15) and Mark Tomlin (15). Company council Richie Mackinnon reported on a new route from Bicester to Oxford and, in the ASLEF tradition, at the end of the meeting there was a light buffet and one or two beers.

Andy Durack, branch secretary



Another great Stratford reunion with more than 70 attending, from their 40s to their 70s. Thank you DO Nigel Gibson for making the presentations – to Peter Dodgson and Roy Marriot (40 years) and Pat Matchan and Tony Froude (25) – and Chris Daughters for organising it.

Dave Pizzie, RMS

A tale of two Harolds

Wigan branch was honoured to welcome general secretary Mick Whelan who, along with members past and present, paid tribute to former Wigan drivers Harold Ashton and Harold Spencer who were celebrating more than 100 years of ASLEF membership between them and were presented with their 50 year medallions.

Harold Ashton started his railway career as a cleaner at Springs Branch in 1961, progressing through the ranks to fireman, and passed for driving in 1970. He transferred to Edge Hill in 1980 and, with the advent of

privatisation and DRI, to Wigan Wallgate in 1997. He was promoted to driver instructor in 2004 and retired in 2009.

Harold Spencer began his career as a cleaner at Hasland in 1954, progressing to fireman, and after loan spells at Willesden and Saltley, transferred to Springs Branch in 1962. He moved to Edge Hill as a driver in 1974 and became an instructor in 1980.

With the split of Liverpool Lime Street in 1994 he transferred to Intercity West Coast, finishing his career working for Virgin before retiring in 2000.

Phil Spencer, branch secretary



Phil Spencer, Mick Whelan, Harold Ashton and Harold Spencer



Mick Holder looks back to June 1915 and life here on the home front

WAR BONUS FOR RAILWAYMEN

According to the Board of Trade, the average weekly wage of railwaymen ranged from 30s 7¾d on North Eastern to 35s 7¾d on Midland. The editor of the *Journal* observes: 'The Midland Railway locomotive men settled their conditions of service as locomotive men themselves, with a special locomotive programme. The North Eastern locomotive men settled theirs by composite conciliation board. Comment is needless.' The editor adds: 'Our members will doubtless all be anxiously waiting for the meeting to review the war bonus, seeing that at the first settlement in February it was agreed it should be reviewed in three months.'

WOMEN ON THE PERMANENT WAY

'Female labour', says the editor, 'is becoming a feature of railway life, for what with lady station masters, booking clerks, dining car attendants, porters, carriage cleaners, and ticket collectors, we shall soon have only the heavier labour left to poor male kind. But we think it will be some time before even the most robust and clever of our lady friends will be found acting as shunters, drivers or firemen, or on the permanent way, although they might yet fill some of the chairs of directors' board rooms, with advantage to all concerned.'

CONDITION OF THE FOOTPLATE

FWS, in response to previous, negative, comment on the use of sick funds, writes: 'Much of the sickness is caused by the deplorable condition of the footplate owing to escaping steam from joints, &c, and manhole joints, face plate and gauge cock joints, also regulator glands. It is common practice for men to have to work 12 hours on these engines with joints blowing and the cab enveloped in water.'

BIG GUN PROJECTILES

Amongst the correspondence about the war is this observation: 'It has been estimated that if the war continues during the remainder of 1915, and the same tremendous daily average of big gun projectiles are expended on land and sea, as has been the case so far, that more copper will have been used in this way than there is at present in use in all the railway locomotive fireboxes on all the railways of the world.'

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ROSS O'CONNOR LARGER THAN LIFE ENTERTAINER

It is with the deepest sadness that I report the tragic sudden death of Edinburgh Waverley driver Ross O'Connor at the age of 55. Ross was a larger than life character with an encouraging word for everyone in the railway, especially newer entrants. He fell ill at the wedding of close friends and fellow railway couple David and Helen Alexander in Musselburgh. Ross was born in Lancashire in 1959, joined the Royal Navy in 1975, and served on HMS Glamorgan, Sheffield, Hydra, Plymouth, Yarmouth and Liverpool. He joined the railway in 1996 and held a number of posts including TE, welcome host and CCTV operator

before becoming a driver at Waverley in 2001. The life and soul of any party, he organised many a garden party in Fife and made everyone at home with his jokes and smile. A keen sports fan, Ross followed Lancashire county cricket and Tottenham Hotspur. He married Catriona in 1982 and loved family time with his children Chris, Siobhan, Teresa and Amanda. Tragically, Amanda died from leukaemia in 2012. This is another blow and our thoughts are with the family. RIP Ross. Waverley is a poorer, sadder place without you but your memory will live on.

Murray Fraser, Edinburgh No 2



Ross, like his gold lamé jacket, lit up a room

ROB SHEEN A REAL COOL CHARACTER

Leytonstone 118 was deeply saddened to hear of the death from cancer of Rob Sheen, who retired four years ago, at St Clare's Hospice in March. Rob joined London Underground as a booking office clerk but soon qualified as a guard and then achieved his boyhood dream of becoming a driver.



Rob achieved his childhood dream

Rob was a real cool character and

commended for leading 700 passengers to safety during a major incident.

As a local Labour councillor he believed in serving his community, especially when there was injustice. Everyone will miss Rob, a great railwayman.

Bob Tong, Leytonstone

DAVE WRIGHT THE BEST OF TIMES

Dave Wright, ex-Saltley driver, died of bone cancer in January at 68. He started work on the railways, at Saltley, in 1964. He was just 15, railway and steam engine mad, and spent a lifetime (well, 45 years) on the footplate, progressing from cleaner through BR and privatisation to become a driver team manager. Like so many railwaymen and women, he did this with no fuss, doing the job in a professional manner, working long hours on shifts most people would tire of. Dave passed out for driving duties at 24, became a registered driver at 31, still at Saltley, then an instructor and an assessor with Virgin. These he regarded as the best of times because working long distance had been his goal since, as a young boy, he watched the trains go by his parents' home at Stechford. He became a driver team manager with Virgin and then CrossCountry, moving to Birmingham New Street, but Dave remained a Saltley man because, like all Saltley men, he secretly loved the place.

Alan Ledger, Saltley

DION TOMKINSON TOP LINK DRIVER

Dion (Di) Tomkinson, a retired King's Cross driver, has died at 82. Di was born in Camberwell, south London, but brought up in Rhymney, south Wales, and Nottingham. When his step-father came out of the army they moved up to London, where he started at King's Cross top shed and worked his way up to be a top link driver. He met Betty

from Hither Green, where they married in 1953, and had three fine children. Di suffered a heart attack in 1991 and underwent surgery at the London Chest Hospital. Di said he felt fine but, try as he might, the railway refused to let him return to work. The ASLEF rep pointed out that as he did not have long to go before his



We got a deal for Di

official retirement date he would be better off letting the union negotiate an ill health package, which he agreed and they did.

PJ Smith, RMS

RONNIE HALSALL STOOD UP FOR RIGHTS

Ronnie Halsall left school at 14 in 1940 and joined the railway at Derby Road shed two years later. When that closed in 1966 he signed up at Southport and eventually became a driver. Ronnie was always immaculately dressed in full uniform, knew his job inside out, and was a good union member. He always encouraged new drivers to join ASLEF, was branch secretary for a while, and always stood up to management.

Bill Baxter, Southport

BARRY TYSON JOKES AND RED BRACES

On the night after Dave Wright's funeral we learned of the tragic death of Barry Tyson (1970-2015); it was a huge shock as the news filtered through to CrossCountry depots. Barry joined the railway after flitting between jobs on leaving school, and found his vocation, working first as a labourer and then as a shunter at Oxley. He applied for a trainee driver's position with CrossCountry, starting at Birmingham New Street in 2001. Barry became known for his quick wit and would often lift the mood with his jokes, anecdotes and trademark red braces. His stories often involved him getting into scrapes, such as getting caught speeding on his motorbike twice on the same stretch of road within three days! A character in the mess room, Barry seemed to live life on the edge, but beneath that no-compromise exterior was a very warm and caring man. Barry worked at Birmingham New Street until 2008, then moved to Bristol depot, living in Stroud with his girlfriend. He settled in well at Bristol, his humour striking a chord with the train crew there. Personal problems caused Barry to move back to Birmingham; he was suffering from depression, which got more severe until he took his own life. His funeral was standing room only, with mourners from all grades, and big contingencies from Bristol and Birmingham, paying their respects. Barry will be very sorely missed. I will remember him for always wearing his ASLEF tie, just to annoy his gaffer!

Michael Clatworthy, Saltley

DAVID HENDERSON NO BETTER MAN

David Henderson passed away in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Gateshead, at the end of March. He was 53 and will be sadly missed. You could not wish to meet a better man.

Trevor Henderson, Tyne & Wear



We welcome letters, either by email to journal@aslef.org.uk or by Royal Mail to **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN**. Each month the writer of our **star letter** wins a rich range of ASLEF regalia.



Tramps and thieves

I recently had the pleasure of meeting an interesting bloke who, at first sight, I believed to be a vagrant. I was on holiday in my caravan at Scarborough where, early each morning and late each evening, I would walk my dog in a nearby field. On my first evening it was quite cold and, as I walked past a solitary tent, this figure appeared and said, 'Good evening, sir.' I looked at this bloke and thought he was a tramp. I nodded, said 'Evening', and hurried back to my nice warm caravan where I told the wife of my findings. We were rather uncomfortable at the thought that this man might relieve us of our possessions.

Very early next morning while walking the dog the bloke was outside his tent with a small camp fire and a billy can making a brew. Again he greeted me so I stopped to make polite conversation. This happened several times over the next few days until I had a lengthy talk with him. He told me he worked the land and was on his way to a job up in Northumberland but had been unwell, with a chest complaint, and had bought a tent, but normally slept out under the stars in his hammock.

I asked if he was ever refused entry to camp sites. He said he didn't normally use them but, because of the facilities, and the fact he had been unwell, he was using this one as he knew they were friendly towards hikers, etc. He said he'd been working the land for the last 15 years and went from area to area as and when he was needed by farmers. He covered many miles walking to and from these jobs, from Somerset when the apples are ready for gathering as far as Cumbria to pick potatoes.

When our holiday was over and we were packing up I asked the wife to put all the items we wouldn't be using again in a bag and I took them up to this bloke to see if he could use them. He shook my hand and thanked me, not only for the stuff but for giving him the time of day. 'Many people think I'm a tramp and steer well clear of me. I often go for days without conversation.' I asked him if he was on benefits; he said he had never drawn a penny from the state and earned an honest crust when and where he could. I put my hand in my pocket, pulled out a tenner and asked if he was offended by me offering it him. We shook hands and wished each other a safe journey.

That's when I confessed that, when I first set eyes on him, I thought he was a tramp, too.

DON'T GIVE UP YOUR RIGHTS JUST TO DRIVE A BIG BLUE LOCO

In response to Scott Letham's letter (*Journal*, May) regarding staff travel facilities, while I understand his frustration that new entrants are unable to share the same facilities as safeguarded staff from the British Rail days, it is ATOC who dictate the rules, not us. The union has tried very hard to persuade ATOC with regards to staff travel but I feel it is one of those items that will not be achievable, as we would like, and our reps' time and effort would be better spent on more important issues, such as pensions.

When the railway was privatised everybody had a right to work, and move to any company they chose, so why would you want to work for a company where you chose to forfeit your safeguarded rights? I am sure it was not to drive a big blue loco, or was it that DRS paid a much better salary, with the



Scott's big blue Direct Rail Services loco

option of mega bucks for mega hours, but you had to forfeit your staff travel to go there?

I know lots of DRS drivers who sold their safeguarded status for a few quid on the headline salary. How short-sighted that seems now, with the cost of train travel, which is another thing we have no control over, and the price of driving a car, but I notice with great amusement that through the hard work of this great union over the last few years the salaries of drivers at most TOCs have drawn level and in some cases overtaken those of the

freight companies.

I am quite content to know that ASLEF is fighting hard for my pay and conditions and think the subs we pay are worth every penny. Who would have predicted, back in 1996, that I would be earning over 46k for driving a two car sprinter for a few hours a day and getting more than 170 days off a year? Plenty of time, in fact, to use all the safeguarded travel you need. Like my old boss used to say, 'Life's tough, Rod, move on and be careful what you wish for.' Wise words indeed.

Rod Bryant, Carlisle

He said, 'Unfortunately it's the world we live in.' Something I agree with 100% and, in future, I will never judge anyone like that again.

Daren Morgan, Knottingley

'Suits me, sir' on rest days

First Group handed back the keys to the ScotRail franchise on 31 March, and the vast majority of drivers were happy to say 'Cheerio', but Abellio were scandalously awarded the franchise despite calls to await the Smith commission. We once again

missed the opportunity to return our railways to a not for profit system. In the last 18 months of their franchise First Group decided they no longer required a rest day working agreement with ASLEF. This looked like we had achieved our aspirations of driving excessive hours out of our industry and forcing First to employ more drivers.

We were questioned – what right has ASLEF to determine who should work their day off – and a vociferous minority weren't slow in showing their displeasure through

BROOKE THANKS ULRS

A message for those that attended the ULRS seminar:

My name is Brooke Handsley, I am six years old. I am writing to thank you for all my big notes that you gave me for my sponsored skip. I was not good at the skipping but I tried my very best. I raised 227 pounds and I think that will help someone with a painful heart. You are all very kind from Brooke Handsley

The delegates at our annual ULRS seminar (report on page 8) raised quite a bit of money for my daughter's sponsored skip for the British Heart Foundation and she has written a wee note of thanks (above). The school were amazed at the amount raised.

Shirley Handsley, project co-ordinator, ASLEF education

social media, bothy debates, etc. Not many came to branch meetings to express an opinion and hear ASLEF's reasons for sanctioning an agreement, including training, recruitment, retention, monitoring, etc, but most importantly First did not require RDW.

However, in the last 18 months, we had crew plan roster clerks playing fast and loose with our agreed documents, covering work by all means possible, including team leaders driving trains, and drivers agreeing to move rest days to work their booked rest days to cover shortages, and drivers agreeing to move from day shift to back shift far exceeding the four hour movement agreement, first and foremost 'because it suits me.' They, and management, aren't interested in LLCs, company council, EC and District Officer as long as their turns are covered. Well, I care about the aforementioned but, more important, I care about the drivers left to pick up the carnage these parasites, the 'it suits me' brigade, leave behind.

Abellio may or may not require rest day working. If they do they can approach ASLEF and discuss it. But the 'suits me' brigade have to be tackled head on. We have a rule book and I urge the 'suits me' brigade to read it.

Ian Smith, chair, ScotRail company council

Future for rails in Wales

Bring Back British Rail Wales is a pressure group to renationalise trains. As a movement we have three aims, we want to nationalise all trains in Wales. Invest in extending the railway

lines throughout Wales and want to increase the service of our railways. We believe these are both vital and achievable if we were to renationalise the railways. Why do we focus on Wales? We believe that there is a clear divide between the Welsh Assembly and the Westminster government. We believe that if Wales renationalises the trains then we can prove to the Westminster government that nationalisation works and is a fairer alternative for people.

Sam Pritchard, president, Bring Back British Rail Wales

Many thanks to all

I started on the railway in 1974 and have just retired early from Abellio Greater Anglia and would like (through the *Journal*) to thank a few people, all associated with ASLEF, for the help and advice I received. First my local rep at Cambridge, Andy Yates, who was first class in dealing with the company on my behalf; Nigel Gibson and Alan Edwards for their help and support throughout; and Thompsons for their efficient service. Many thanks to all.

Pat North, Cambridge

Totally blown away

I want to thank everyone for all the support (publicity, assistance, donations, granting rest days) my family and I received in the run up to and beyond the C2C challenge. We completed it within the timescale (just!) after supreme efforts from everyone involved and are absolutely delighted to have raised £9,000 for the CLIC Sargent charity. We are totally blown away by everyone's generosity.

Nick Duncan, Newcastle

St George's Day reunion

What a great day we all had on 23 April! It was fantastic to see so many faces old and new, together in the same place, sharing stories and reminiscing about times gone by. Almost 1,800 years of service in one room. I can't wait for the next one. A collection was made for the Railway Benevolent Fund.

Brian McLaughlin, FLHH

So long, farewell

I want to say thank you to all ASLEF members, EC and officers, branch secretaries, reps and company councillors, for giving me nearly 20 years in a lovely job. I didn't say 'Goodbye' to everyone – apologies – and best wishes to you all. I had a lovely send-off which I will remember for ever along with my lovely years with you lot! My love to the RMS also, who are very dear to me. I will enjoy my retirement as much as I enjoyed my years working in admin with ASLEF.

Jenny Baldwin, Colindale



LONGSIGHT branch has produced a limited number of badges to commemorate its 125th anniversary. £5 + £1

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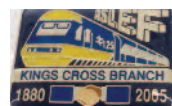
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Thumbs up for king who 'did great wrong and little right'



The British Library is staging an exhibition to mark the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta on 19 June 1215. CHRIS PROCTOR

went along to take a fresh look at a dusty document that changed our lives...

THE Magna Carta is the supreme political document. It embodies every liberal and democratic principle we hold dear, while not tying itself down to anything of substance. In this sense, it is the definitive modern political manifesto.

The myths about it are legion, and largely false. It did not establish the right to a trial before arrest and it did not afford universal rights, because it only applied to 'free men' which excluded all women and the vast majority of the male population; it offered no form of democracy beyond a group of 25 baron enforcers who could 'petition' the king if he ignored it; it wasn't 'granted'; it was extracted; and it wasn't even signed, as it's unlikely that King John was a dab hand with a pen. But it was sealed – and 800 years later it resonates more than anyone at Runnymede in June 1215 could ever have imagined.

'He ruled England with maine and might, did great wrong, and little right' – traditional English folk song

The Magna Carta became a direct antecedent of the first Bill of Rights in history, which Britain passed in 1689; of the US Declaration of Independence (Thomas Jefferson's handwritten copy is at the exhibition) and of the US Bill of Rights (the copy signed in 1790 in Delaware lies next to the Declaration). In the 1964 Rivonia trial Nelson Mandela

described it as a document that should be 'held in veneration'. It inspired the 19th century Chartists and the 20th century anti-colonialists; it is still quoted (or effectively misquoted) today in struggles against oppression, including against repressive measures sought by elected governments. Its symbolic worth is monumental.

'King John was not a good man, he had his little ways.' – King John's Christmas by AA Milne

But the actual text doesn't bear too much scrutiny, to be frank, and the proposed distribution of a facsimile of the Salisbury Cathedral copy to every primary school in the UK could be unprofitable. Not many nippers of my acquaintance are keen to know about scutage, stanks or waynage; the inheritance rights of earls; rents for hundreds, wapentakes and trithings; or even the removal of kiddles from the Thames. They may be more entertained to know that Winston Churchill was on the point of giving one of the four existing Magna Cartas to the Americans, to entice them into the Second World War, before Lincoln Cathedral scuppered the plan by pointing out that he couldn't as it belonged to them. That is, if the nippers don't think Churchill is that dog in the insurance ad.

When it was sealed, the Magna Carta had no ambition to incorporate any global values. It was a series of clauses forming an



Bad King John out hunting with hounds (top); signing the Great Charter at Runnymede in an inaccurate Victorian engraving (above); he didn't sign it, he used his seal (above right)

agreement to end a dispute between a monarch and a baron élite; like any agreement, it was binding until one of the signatories felt strong enough to revoke it. In fact, it was only twelve weeks before King John ditched it, with the support of Pope Innocent III who described it as 'base and shameful, null and void of all validity for ever'. Bad call by the pontiff there.

The survival of Magna Carta was secured when John died in November the following year and the Great Charter was confirmed by nine-year-old Henry III. John, it has to be said, was not a popular monarch. When he succumbed to dysentery during a campaign in the east of England, one chronicler lamented him in these terms: 'Foul as it is, Hell itself is made fouler by the presence of King John.'

Magna Carta's fortunes took a very different turn. Over the past

eight centuries it has become much more than a local agreement to solve a political crisis. Today these faded, fragile and barely legible documents are feted symbols of ancient, enduring and universal human rights and liberties: and this British Library exhibition is a rich and fruitful celebration of their status.

'John, John, Bad King John, shamed the throne that he sat on' – Eleanor Farjeon

It's worth adding that, as well as a predictable host of celebrated paintings and documents, the Library has included some splendidly esoteric items such as coins and tally sticks, various items of clothing, including the boots of John's Chancellor, Hubert Walter, and my personal favourite, King John's thumb bone. It's worth going along for this alone. Reflecting the mythology of the Carta itself, it could be called in evidence of a universal right to hitchhike.

○ The exhibition *Magna Carta: Law, Liberty, Legacy* is at the British Library (next to St Pancras station) in London until 1 September. Admission is £12.

Prize Crossword number 110 by Zebedee



Solution to prize crossword number 109 which appeared in the May edition of the ASLEF Journal

Across: 3 Foolproof 7 Terrace 8 Odder 10 Also 11 Decrease 13 Dillon 14 Adrift 16 Cast iron 17 Egan 20 Discs 21 Repairs 22 Spoonfeed

Down: 1 Tetra 2 Chrysalises 3 Flaw 4 Opener 5 Protrude 6 Forfeit 9 Drawing pins 12 Robinson 13 Decades 15 Hoarse 18 Nosey 19 Sped

Congratulations to **Paul Crabtree** of **Haslingden, Rossendale, Lancashire**, who was last month's winner.

Across

- 1 Act in disregard of laws, rules, contracts (10)
 8 Waited in hiding to attack (7)
 9 Stick found in papa's tea (5)
 10 Flight in an organised tour (4)
 11 Lacking affection or warm feeling (8)
 13 Constructive member of society (5)
 14 Donna ----- 1980s US sex symbol (5)
 16 Sound of liquid falling drop by drop (8)
 17 Couple (4)
 20 Oscine bird (5)

Down

- 1 Keep to trail with some hesitation (5)
 2 UK radio debating programme (3, 9)
 3 ---- defence, a chess opening (4)
 4 (Nautical) steering mechanism (6)
 5 A Jew of Spanish, Portuguese or North African descent (8)
 6 Condition of being deprived of oxygen (12)

7 Make less lively or acute (6)

- 12 An informal photograph (8)
 13 Alter, change (6)
 15 Not balanced – isn't that odd? (6)
 18 Dishonest person in sport (5)
 19 Expression of some desire or inclination (4)



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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Thanks for all your responses to the 109th ASLEF crossword in the May edition. If you successfully complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 June

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